

Workforce Development Equity Framework

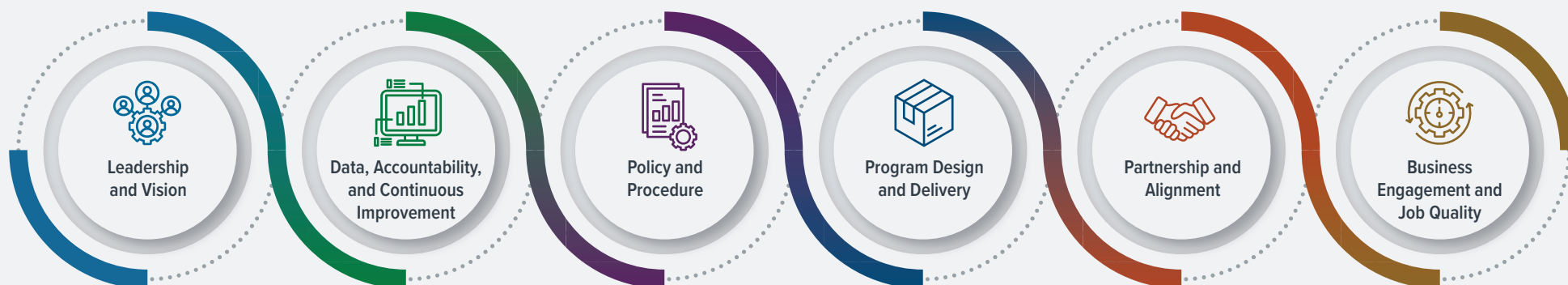
Equity lies at the heart of a just and inclusive society, in which all individuals have the opportunity to achieve their full potential. In the public workforce development system, equity is not just an aspirational goal but a fundamental principle that drives our efforts to create fair and accessible pathways to economic opportunity. Equity in this system is about more than just leveling the playing field; it's about actively dismantling barriers and fostering environments in which every person, regardless of their situation and circumstances, can access high-quality, living-wage employment.

It is imperative to establish a comprehensive framework that guides the design and implementation of workforce development services at the state and local levels to operationalize this vision of equity. At its core, the framework is rooted in the belief that achieving equity requires intentional and sustained efforts across all facets of the workforce system. It is not enough to simply acknowledge disparities; we must proactively address them through targeted interventions and systemic reforms. By embedding equity principles into every aspect of service design and delivery, we can create a workforce system that not only removes barriers but also fosters an enduring culture of equity and inclusion.

FRAMEWORK DEFINITION OF EQUITY

Equity in the public workforce system is about fairness and taking deliberate actions to remove barriers and promote opportunities to ensure that people and communities have access to services that support their ability to thrive.

Using the Workforce Development Equity Framework



The framework is intended to be adaptable for use by state or local workforce boards and their partners or for regional partnerships. In this context, when the term “system” is mentioned within the framework, it pertains to the scope of responsibility for the state or local workforce board implementing the framework.

This workforce development equity framework provides a set of elements that underpin equitable service design and delivery to create an enduring culture of equity. These elements are accompanied by examples of actionable strategies for state and local workforce development systems to achieve equitable access and outcomes for all individuals and communities. The strategies are not exhaustive and should be tailored to meet the needs within each local or state system.

Leadership and Vision



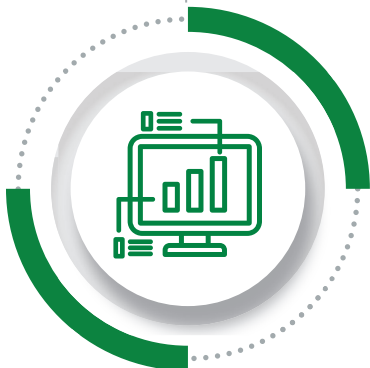
ELEMENTS

System leaders demonstrate a commitment to equity by modeling inclusive behaviors, engaging with diverse perspectives and experiences, recognizing biases in themselves and the organization they lead, and taking accountability for the change that must occur within their organization to create and sustain a workforce system that empowers customers to equitably participate in and benefit from a growing economy. System leaders are engaged in finding the root cause of problems, including leadership and policy inequities, and making positive changes to achieve equity throughout the system.

STRATEGIES

- Create a definition of equity for your system.
- Articulate a vision for equitable workforce development at the state and/or local level.
- Align strategic plans, budgets, initiatives, and service design to support the vision.
- Assess the extent to which staff and leadership reflect the demographics of the service area and system customers and address gaps through promotion, hiring, and professional development.
- Create a culture of inclusivity that extends from staff to customers.
- Provide ongoing equity and bias professional development for all staff.
- Actively seek input from all staff throughout the system.
- Prioritize partnering with organizations owned and/or led by women, people of color, people with disabilities, etc.

Data, Accountability, and Continuous Improvement



ELEMENTS

The system uses data to understand its current and desired state of equity. It reviews key labor market data to understand who faces barriers within their economy and to assess the extent to which it currently serves its target populations. They disaggregate customer data by key demographic characteristics and analyze the data to identify disparate impact. They use data to inform goal setting, program design, delivery, and continuous improvement. The system uses data and customer input to continually evaluate progress made and ongoing barriers to equity.

STRATEGIES

- Set systemwide diversity targets to measure enrollment, engagement, and outcomes.
- Track data related to access and participation barriers.
- Create processes for regular and ongoing data review and make adjustments based on data to address underperformance.
- Extend diversity training to partners, including employer partners.
- Provide regular, transparent reports on outcomes based on disaggregated demographic characteristics.

Policy and Procedure



ELEMENTS

The system reviews current policies and procedures through an equity lens, ensuring that access, services, and outcomes are inclusive for all. By consistently evaluating policies through an equity lens, workforce development systems identify and rectify potential disparities that may arise, creating an environment in which everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

STRATEGIES

- Create a policy equity review team.
- Use an equity policy review tool and audit process to identify who benefits from a policy and who does not.
- Ensure that resources are equitably leveraged and implemented through policy.
- Use data to inform equitable policy and its development.
- Use culturally competent and inclusive language throughout all policies.

Program Design and Delivery



ELEMENTS

Services are designed, delivered, and tailored on the basis of data and customer input and voice. Services are structured and implemented to minimize bias in recruitment, enrollment, and engagement. The system addresses barriers to success through an intentional service delivery design that leads to good jobs and family-sustaining wages.

STRATEGIES

- Include people with diverse backgrounds representative of the needs of the community on committees, advisory boards, etc.
- Clearly communicate steps taken to tailor services based on data and customer input to board, staff, and community stakeholders.
- Consider necessary wraparound supports, additional funding, and community partnerships needed to support access and participation for all job seekers.
- Utilize sector strategies to identify high-quality in-demand jobs.
- Create clear career pathways that identify career progression opportunities, recognize prior experience, and establish diverse routes to success.
- Provide career coaching that assists job seekers in navigating career pathways.
- Develop training programs and partnerships that provide access through relevant training modalities, strategic scheduling, and work-based learning opportunities.
- Create and utilize robust customer feedback mechanisms.

Partnership and Alignment



ELEMENTS

The public workforce system facilitates partnerships across the full range of organizations in the broader workforce development ecosystem to meet the multifaceted needs of customers and allow a variety of perspectives and strengths to be recognized as they work together to support programmatic success.

STRATEGIES

- Extend diversity training to partners, including employer partners.
- Partner with trusted culturally relevant community-based organizations to provide services, including wraparound services to the community.
- Coordinate service delivery to minimize unnecessary meetings, data collection, or other barriers to participation.
- Consider formal agreements with culturally relevant organizations, taking into account funding needs and realities.
- Establish mechanisms for data sharing to identify system gaps, track outcomes, and measure the effectiveness of the system for all groups of people.

Business Engagement and Job Quality



ELEMENTS

The system engages with employers to understand hiring and skill needs, increasing the likelihood of job placement, retention, and advancement for job seekers. It promotes hiring practices with employers that prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion and advocates for job quality standards that promote fair wages, benefits, and working conditions for all workers.

STRATEGIES

- Use sector strategies to understand industry needs and requirements.
- Set requirements for employer partnerships that raise overall job quality and outcomes.
- Provide diversity, equity, and inclusion training for employer groups and industry sectors, prioritizing recruitment, hiring, and retention practices.
- Utilize formal processes to assist employers in identifying skills needed to minimize unnecessary hiring requirements.
- Set a minimum wage requirement for approved training programs and funding.
- Implement mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the impact of business engagement and job quality initiatives.